

Message Text

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SUBJ: FURTHER GOP REACTION TO INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST

REF: ISLAMABAD 5582

SUMMARY. GOP HAS CONTINUED TO EXPRESS ITS ALARM AND CONCERN OVER INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST. IN SPEECH TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, BHUTTO WARNED OF MILITARY AND POLITICAL THREAT FROM INDIA, REJECTED IDEA OF PAKISTAN ITSELF GOING NUCLEAR, AND CALLED UPON INDIA TO ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED NEWS HAS CONTINUED TO CASTIGATE INDIA AND WARN OF DANGER TO ALL ASIA POSED BY INDIAN TEST. END SUMMARY.

1. SEVERAL DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE PAST WEEKEND FURTHER

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REFLECTED THE GOP'S CONTINUING PREOCCUPATION WITH THE

INDIAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSION: A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE CLIMAXED BY A SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, HEAVY PRESS COMMENT, AND THE RELEASE BY THE GOP OF THE TEXTS OF THE GANDHI-BHUTTO CORRESPONDENCE (REPORTED SEPTTEL).

2. THE JUNE 7 ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON THE INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST TOOK PLACE IN AN ATMOSPHERE ALREADY CHARGED WITH MUSLIM SECTARIAN UNREST. ASSEMBLY MEMBERS, ATTENDING DIPLOMATS AND THE PUBLIC HAD TO PRESS THEIR WAY INTO THE ASSEMBLY BUILDING THROUGH A FORMATION OF ABOUT 400 POLICE HOLDING OFF SEVERAL THOUSAND VOCIFEROUS ORTHODOX MUSLIMS DEMONSTRATING AGAINST THE HETERODOX AHMADIYA SECT. SOME OF THOSE ATTENDING (AND THE NEARBY USAID BUILDING AS WELL) WERE EXPOSED TO THE TEAR GAS WHICH THE POLICE WERE FORCED TO USE, TOGETHER WITH LATHI CHARGES, TO HOLD THE DEMONSTRATORS IN CHECK.

3. ALTHOUGH THE SESSION WAS CONVENED IN RESPONSE TO AN EARLIER REQUEST OF THE OPPOSITION, THE LATTER PROMPTLY WALKED OUT IN A BOYCOTT, EXPLAINING THEIR ACTION AS A PROTEST AGAINST POLICE TREATMENT OF THE DEMONSTRATORS OUTSIDE THE ASSEMBLY HALL. A NUMBER OF PAKISTAN PEOPLES PARTY MNA'S AND SUPPORTERS THEN OPENED THE DEBATE BY SPEAKING ON THE DANGER FACING THE COUNTRY FROM INDIA'S NUCLEAR CAPABILITY. ALL URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO STRENGTHEN ITS DEFENSES AND SEVERAL CALLED FOR PAKISTAN TO DEVELOP ITS OWN NUCLEAR WEAPONS. TAKING THE FLOOR TO WIND UP THE DEBATE, BHUTTO FOR SIXTY-FIVE MINUTES, THE FIRST HALF OF IT DIRECTED LARGELY TO CASTIGATING THE OPPOSITION AS TOOLS OF INDIA XJR BOYCOTTING A DEBATE ON A SUBJECT OF SUCH GREAT PUBLIC CONCERN.

4. TURNING TO THE DEMANDS THAT PAKISTAN DEVELOP ITS OWN NUCLEAR WEAPONS, BHUTTO NEXT ARGUED THAT PAKISTAN COULD NOT BUILD THE BOMB. ASSERTING THAT PARTITION HAD LEFT INDIA ECONOMICALLY AND TECHNOLOGICALLY MORE ADVANCED THAN PAKISTAN, HE REMINDED HIS AUDIENCE THAT INDIA HAD EMBARKED ON AN AMBITIOUS NUCLEAR PROGRAM IN THE 1951'S WHILE PAKISTAN'S DECISION TO DEVELOP AN INDIGENOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY WAS NOT TAKEN BY THE GOP UNTIL 1972. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDUSTRIALIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY WAS ALSO NECESSARY FOR A NUCLEAR PROGRAM AND PAKISTAN WAS STILL BACKWARD IN THESE AREAS. PAKISTAN'S PROGRAM WOULD BE FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES ONLY, THE PRIMEMIN DECLARED. IN ANY CASE, THE PRESENT NUCLEAR POWERS WOULD CERTAINLY GUARD THEIR KNOW HOW AND NUCLEAR MATERIALS CAREFULLY IN THE WAKE OF THE INDIAN TEST TO AVOID FURTHER PROLIFERATION,

AND ANY PUBLIC CALL FOR A WEAPONS PROGRAM COULD PRECIPITATE ACTIVE EFFORTS ON THE PART OF THE NUCLEAR POWERS TO OBSTRUCT PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM.

5. CONTINUING, BHUTTO CHARGED THAT INDIA'S NEW NUCLEAR CAPABILITY THREATENED PAKISTAN MILITARILY AND POLITICALLY. HE ARGUED THAT WHILE THE OTHER NUCLEAR "HAVES" HAVE GREAT POWERS AND HAD USED RESTRAINT, THE 25 YEARS OF INDO-PAK CONFRONTATION AND THREE WARS HAD DEMONSTRATED THAT NO RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN COULD PRECLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF INDIA USING THE ATOMIC BOMB. REFERRING TO INDIA'S ASSURANCE THAT ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM WAS DEVOTED ONLY TO PEACEFUL USES, HE COMMENTED THAT IN A DEMOCRACY GOVERNMENTS COULD ALWAYS CHANGE. HE SAID ABOUT THE FUTURE, "IF INDIA FOUND ITSELF IN A TIGHT CORNER, SHE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO USE THE BOMB".

6. AS TO INDIA'S MOTIVES, BHUTTO DISMISSED THE IDEA THAT THE GOI HAD ONLY SOUGHT INTERNATIONAL STATUS. INDIA ALREADY HAD SUFFICIENT PRESTIGE DERIVED FROM ITS SIZE, ANCIENT CIVILIZATION, LITERATURE, ART AND PHILOSOPHY, HE DECLARED. WHILE INDIA WAS FACING THE WORST ECONOMIC CRISIS OF ITS LIFE, IT HAD "INDULGED IN THE LUXURY OF AN ATOMIC EXPLOSION" IN ORDER TO BRANDISH A NUCLEAR SWORD, IMPOSE HEGEMONY OVER ITS NEIGHBORS, AND FORCE THE WORLD TO RECOGNIZE IT AS THE DOMINANT POWER OF THE SUBCONTINENT. AS ONE EXAMPLE OF SUCH ATTEMPTED COERCION, HE CITED INDIA'S RECENT OFFER TO PAKISTAN OF A NO-WAR PACT (WHICH PAKISTAN HAS ALWAYS SEEN AS A DEVICE FOR GETTING THE GOP TO GIVE UP ITS KASHMIR CLAIM.)

7. PROGRESS TOWARDS NORMALIZATION OF INDO-PAK RELATIONS HAD RECEIVED A SETBACK, BHUTTO DECLARED. THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POSTPONED BILATERAL TALKS FOR RESTORATION OF TRAVEL AND COMMUNICATIONS WOULD HAVE TO WAIT "FOR A DECENT PERIOD OF TIME" BEFORE CONSIDERATION OF THE NEXT STEP. THE PRIMEMIN DID NOT SPECIFY THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR RENEWED TALKS BUT PROMISED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD REFUSE TO BE INTIMIDATED AND WOULD INSIST UPON NEGOTIATIONS BASED ON SOVEREIGN EQUALITY. AS HE CONCLUDED, THE ASSEMBLY ERUPTED WITH APPLAUSE.

8. JUNE 10 PAPERS CONTINUED TO PLAY THE THEME OF A MILITARY THREAT TO PAKISTAN AND A SETBACK IN INDO-AK RELATIONS AS THE GANDHI-BHUTTO CORRESPONDENCE WAS MADE PUBLIC. A LEAD ARTICLE IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PAKISTAN TIMES CHARGED THAT INDIA'S NUCLEAR TEST WAS DESIGNED "NOT ONLY TO SABOTAGE THE FORTHCOMING INDO-PAK

NEGOTIATIONS BUT ALSO TO BEFOUL THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE"
IN THE SUBCONTINENT. CHARGING THAT "THE WAR SONGS
BROADCAST ... BY ALL-INDIA RADIO" BELIED INDIA'S
PEACEFUL PROTESTATIONS, THE ARTICLE ASSERTED THAT INDIA'S
MILITARY BUILDUP WAS PROCEEDING AT "A FRENZIED PACE" AND
POSED A DANGER TO THE PEACE OF THE ENTIRE AREA. HAVING
OPENED THE WAY TO FURTHER NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, INDIA HAD
BROUGHT "THE THREAT OF A NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST"
TO THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA AND HAD PROVIDED THE SUPER-POWERS
A GOOD EXCUSE TO STATION NOT ONLY CONVENTIONAL BUT NUCLEAR
POWERED WARSHIPS IN THE AREA. BEHIND INDIA, THE ARTICLE
WARNED, STOOD THE SOVIET UNION INTENT ON BUILDING UP
INDIA AS A COUNTER TO CHINA. AS A CONSEQUENCE, "ASIA
IS NOW A MUCH MORE DANGEROUS PLACE THAN IT WAS BEFORE
MAY 18."

9. COMMENT: IN ASSEMBLY DEBATE, MEDIA COVERAGE AND
PUBLICATION OF THE BHUTTO-GANDHI LETTER EXCHANGE,
THE GOP CONTINUES TO EXPRESS ITS ALARM OVER THE INDIAN
NUCLEAR TEST THREE WEEKS AFTER THE EVENT. WHILE EARLIER
GOP REACTION HAD TENDED TO HIGHLIGHT THE HAZARD TO
PAKISTAN POSED BY INDIA'S ANTICIPATED NUCLEAR-BACKED
POLITICAL COERCION, INCREASINGLY PAKISTANIS HAVE ALSO
BEGUN WARNING THAT INDIAN NUCLEAR CAPABILITY POSES
A DIRECT MILITARY THREAT TO PAKISTAN AS WELL. NEITHER IN
HIS ASSEMBLY SPEECH NOR IN HIS LETTER TO PM GANDHI
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HOWEVER, DID BHUTTO CLOSE THE DOOR TO EVENTUAL RESUMED
NEGOTIATIONS AND THE SEARCH FOR NORMALIZATION
OF RELATIONS WITH INDIA.
BYROADE.

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